Spring 2007 — Volume X, Issue I

SaskPower Shand Greenhouse REVIEW

Last Mountain Lake National Wildlife Area

Article by Lisa May

Currently in Canada there are 51 National Wildlife Areas and 95 Migratory Bird Sanctuaries. But did you know that the first Federal Bird Sanctuary in North America was established in 1887 right here in what is now Saskatchewan? When this area was originally set aside, we were a part of the Northwest Territories. The Last Mountain Lake National Wildlife Area (NWA) is one of the hidden gems of our province. Whether your interest is in waterfowl, migratory birds, small mammals, or native prairie plants, you will find something to pique your interest in this fascinating stopping place.

The NWA is home to many different types of habitat, including native mixed-grass prairie, cultivated crop and hay areas, and a diversity of wetland types. The site has been named a RAMSAR "wetland of international importance." It is located right in the middle of the central flyway of North America and can play host to many thousands of birds during peak migration. Imagine 50,000 Sandhill Cranes all in one location! Over 280 different bird species migrate through this area. It is an important breeding ground for over 100 types of birds and provides habitat for nine species of vulnerable, threatened or endangered birds: Peregrine Falcons, Piping Plovers, Whooping Cranes, Burrowing Owls, Ferruginous Hawks, Loggerhead Shrikes, Baird's Sparrows, Caspian Terns and Short-Eared Owls.

NWA's native plant nursery.
Credit: Kerry Hecker, Environment Canada, Canadian Wildlife Services

If mammals are more up your alley, the uplands and prairie areas are home to ground squirrels, badgers, weasels, deer, coyotes, foxes and many others. Crucial as a food supply, many types of voles and mice are plentiful as well. Also, be on the lookout for well-used buffalo rubbing stones, a reminder of a time when herds of bison roamed the prairies.

If you are a plant person, you are in for a treat. NWA has within its boundaries one of the few native mixed-grass prairie areas left in Canada. Environment Canada employees gather seed from over 100 species of native plants, which they propagate and then plant to restore cultivated land to its former prairie grassland plant community - an increasingly rare habitat. There is also a native seed nursery which contains over 70 wildflower species. Shand Greenhouse has participated in growing many of the plant species that are part of the seed nursery.

If you are planning a visit to the NWA, you have several options. The information kiosk has maps, pamphlets and self-guided

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SaskPower Shand Greenhouse, adjacent to Shand Power Station, helps to offset the environmental impacts of generating electricity for Saskatchewan communities.

Please write or call with your comments and ideas.

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Mark Your 2007 Calendars!

March 15	Deadline for 2007 tree seedling applications
April 1 - August 31	Elm tree pruning ban dates
April 22	Earth Day
May 2 - 3	Seedling distribution
June 3 - 9	Canadian Environment Week
June 5	World Environment Day (www.unep.org/wed)
July	AAFC-PFRA Shelterbelt Center Field Day (date TBA, call 1-866-766-2284 for more information)
July 1	Begin accepting applications for 2008 tree seedlings

Last Mountain Lake National Wildlife Area (cont'd)

A sample of the NWA's prairie wildlife.
Credit: Lois Vanthuyne, Environment Canada, Canadian Wildlife Services

tours. You can try an hour-long driving tour, or if you prefer getting close to the action, there are two different nature trails to try out: one highlights the wetland habitat, the other focuses on grasslands. There is an observation tower to watch birds and a number of parking lots to stop and admire the natural beauty of the area. The driving tour is suitable for group tours – plan to get the narrative CD in advance, or drop in during normal business hours (8am-4pm, Mon-Fri) to borrow a CD for the hour. You can hunt and fish within the NWA, but there are specific regulations regarding hunting times and restricted areas. Please do your research before enjoying this resource. The NWA office is a good starting point for planning.

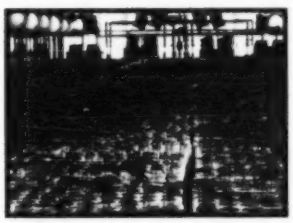
It is very seldom that any of us get the chance to witness prairie wildlife in its natural habitat. Time travel back to 1887 and see what parts of Saskatchewan looked like before settlement. If you have never taken the time to explore the Last Mountain Lake National Wildlife Area, you are missing out on a rare opportunity to catch a glimpse of the fantastic diversity that can exist in prairie habitats.

For more information, contact:
Last Mountain Lake
National Wildlife Area
Canadian Wildlife Service
Box 280
Simpson, SK S0G 4M0

Driving instructions:
14 km east of Simpson
Follow the signage
Phone: (306) 836-2022

The Need for Seed Fulfilled!

Article by Shelley Heidinger



Bur oak seedlings

Thank you to all of our interested readers who responded to our call for seed pickers. The response provided us with some new and diverse seed picking locations from across the province in many species.

The success is evident in our greenhouse right now! The past several years have seen little to no seed available for bur oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*). This, combined with limited ability to find people interested in closely monitoring the oak development, reduced the amount of oak we have been growing to the point we could no longer offer this species on our application.

Thanks to some of our customers and even visitors touring the greenhouse, we have been able to source enough seed to fill a whole greenhouse bay with oak – 10 tables worth with enough left over to study storage options! The last few years we have been fortunate to fill one table using every seed received. This is just one example of our successful partnership with our seed pickers.

For more information on seed collection or what species may need to be picked this season, please contact Shand Greenhouse. Please note that due to the number of people interested in picking certain species, we may in some cases be unable to utilize all interested parties each year.

2008-05150/

A happy Trees and Kids Week participant.

Trees and Kids Week 2006

Article by Errin Pick and Courtney Gress

Have you ever wondered about the secret lives of the plants around you? What's really going on inside that seemingly boring and still tree? Well, from June 5 to 9, 2006, 166 students from six local schools participated in the annual Trees and Kids Week, where they learned about all of the life and death struggles that happen in plants everyday.

The students participated in two main sessions: indoor science and outdoor investigations. While at the inside science station, students learned all about the inner workings of the plants around them. First off, they learned about two very important parts of the plant: the xylem, which carries the water, and the phloem, which carries the sugars produced during photosynthesis. They were able to see the xylem in action as it moved food colouring up carnations to dye the petals. They also saw photosynthesis at work as we tested plants for the sugars produced during photosynthesis. Finally, they studied wood cookies, which showed them all the fascinating and functional parts of the tree.

At the outdoor investigations, groups of students were given "clues" to solve the mystery on Shand hill. They matched their clues to actual trees and shrubs in the landscape to get puzzle pieces to find out what their mystery tree was. They had to be careful and use all of their investigative skills, though, because someone had put "fooler" pieces in some of the boxes!

Finally, students were tested on how well they had listened and learned in their sessions by playing the Tree of Knowledge game. The students were split into two teams, where they then had to run through tubes of "xylem" or "phloem" and search the Tree of Knowledge for the answer to their question. The correct answers were placed on each team's tree and the team with the most correct answers won a fabulous prize - candy!

And, of course, we can't forget about lunch. Whether it was the morning session wrapping up with it or the afternoon session starting with it, everyone enjoyed the meal of barbequed hot dogs, juice boxes, and ice cream in waffle cones!

Reports came back that the students not only learned a lot, but that they had fun doing it! Here at the Greenhouse, we know that we certainly had a great time sharing with the students the secret lives of trees, and we're certainly looking forward to this year's Trees and Kids Week from June 4 to 8.

Greenhouse Q and A

Article by Shelley Heidinger

Q: What is fire blight and what do I do about it?

A: Fire blight (*Erwinia amylovera*) is a bacterial disease that usually affects apples, pears, roses and quince. Mountain ash, hawthorn, cotoneaster and Saskatoon are also susceptible to the disease. Symptoms are usually first exhibited in the blossoms, moving up the twigs and on to the branches. Flowers turn brown and wilt; branches appear burnt with a shrivelled, blackened and twisted look to them. In severe cases, the plant may have amber or reddish ooze coming from cankers. This ooze contains the bacteria. The disease may be spread by rain splash, direct contact with other plants, gardeners, insects, birds or animals.

There is no cure for fireblight. Prevention and control involve removal of infected material 8 to 12 inches below the affected area. Any material that is removed should be burned, buried or bagged and discarded at the local landfill, as any debris will contain bacteria and act as a source of infection if left laying about. Disinfect pruning tools between each cut and when you are finished with a 3:1 denatured alcohol and water solution or a 10 per cent household bleach solution (one part bleach to nine parts water). It is possible that Bordeaux mix sprayed during dormancy may also prevent fire blight outbreaks.

If you have a question for Greenhouse Q and A, email [illegible] or phone us!

For the Kids...Recycled Gardening!

Recycled newspaper pots are sturdy, environmentally friendly and inexpensive. They are great for starting seeds, can be planted directly into the ground and are simple to make.

1. Take a full-size sheet of newspaper and fold it in half lengthwise, then fold it lengthwise again (adjust amount of paper for size of cup if needed).

2. Take a large plastic drinking cup (straight sides work best) and lay it on its side at the end of the folded paper. It should be positioned so that the bottom 3cm of the cup is visible and the paper also hangs over the top. Roll the paper around the cup.

3. Pick up the cup and push the extra paper into the hole at the top.

4. Hold the paper pot securely in your hand and remove the cup.

5. Turn the cup over and reinsert it into the pot so the bottom on the cup is touching the paper you pushed into the hole.

6. Set the cup down on a table so that is secures the bottom of the newspaper pot and remove the cup.

Once the pot is filled with soil it will be sturdy and durable. If you place it on an old baking sheet or cake pan close to other pots, the extra support will help prevent the sides from collapsing.

Plants that are quick and easy to grow are available at local garden centers. Choose plants such as zinnias and marigolds, or sow your favourite herb. Follow the instructions for planting on the package.

Once your seed is started you can put the plant into your garden, pot and all. The pot will break down quickly and provide a great start for your seedlings.

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